

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: SEDU, GR
SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS: GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITY
REFORM BILL SPAWNS CONTROVERSY AND OPPOSITION

1. THE INTRODUCTION BY THE GOVERNMENT LAST WEEK OF A BASIC LAW WHICH WOULD BRING MUCH-NEEDED REFORM TO GREECE'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM HAS LED TO CONTROVERSY AND OPPOSITION BY STUDENT GROUPS AND THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES. THE STUDENTS ORGANIZED A RALLY ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 29, WHICH TOOK PLACE WITHOUT INCIDENT, CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE BILL. THEIR MAIN CRITICISM CENTERS ON PROVISIONS WHICH WOULD:

-- LIMIT THE NUMBER OF TIMES A STUDENT CAN TAKE EXAMINATIONS FOR COURSES HE HAS FAILED, AND

-- LIMIT THE TIME (6-7 YEARS IN MOST CASES) DURING WHICH A STUDENT MUST COMPLETE HIS UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE. THEY HAVE ALSO OBJECTED TO THE RETENTION IN THE BILL, ON AN INTERIM BASIS, OF THE PROFESSORIAL CHAIR SYSTEM, ALTHOUGH THE ULTIMATE GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVE, SHARED BY THE STUDENTS, IS TO REPLACE THIS SYSTEM WITH A MORE MODERN DEPARTMENTAL ONE.

2. SEEN BUT NOT HEARD IN THIS CONTROVERSY IS THE FACT

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THAT THE TIME LIMITATION ON COMPLETION OF DEGREES WILL ALSO REDUCE CAMPUS POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY FORCING STUDENT POLITICAL PROFESSIONALS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN ON CAMPUS WELL IN EXCESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LIMIT, TO LEAVE. SUCH A MEASURE, TOGETHER WITH ANOTHER PROVISION CALLING FOR COMPULSORY VOTING IN STUDENT ELECTIONS, STRIKES DIRECTLY AT THE CAMPUS INFLUENCE

OF THE PRESENT STUDENT LEADERS AND THE OPPOSITION
POLITICAL PARTIES -- IN PARTICULAR THE COMMUNIST PARTY
AND PASOK WHICH DOMINATE ORGANIZED STUDENT GROUPS --
WITH WHOM THEY ARE AFFILIATED.

3. THERE ARE ALSO COGENT AND REASONED CRITICISMS
THAT THE TIME LIMITATION ASPECTS OF THE BILL WILL
AFFECT MOST SEVERELY THE POORER WORKING STUDENTS WHO
OFTEN REQUIRE A SUBSTANTIAL LENGTH OF TIME TO COMPLETE
THEIR STUDIES ON THE REDUCED SCHEDULE WHICH THEIR
EMPLOYMENT DEMANDS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY
COMPROMISED IN THEIR CASE AND AGREED TO AN ADDITIONAL
YEAR'S GRACE FOR WORKING STUDENTS.

4. THE BILL IS CURRENTLY BEING DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT.
MCCLOSKEY

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